

Message of the Week

July 3-9, 2002

Presented by Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN)

“On Independence Day, let’s be thankful for the liberties in this country that have been sustained by 226 years of American resilience.”

- Independence Day commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and others were chosen by the Continental Congress to compose a formal declaration of independence. Jefferson presented the first draft to Congress on June 28, 1776. After making various changes, Congress approved the Declaration of Independence as we know it today late in the afternoon of July 4th.
- Although the signing of the Declaration was not completed until August, July 4th has been accepted as the official anniversary of American independence. The first Independence Day celebration took place on July 4, 1777. And by the early 19th century, the traditions of parades, picnics, and fireworks were established as the way to celebrate America's birthday.
- The American promise of liberty, as outlined in the Declaration: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

To read the Declaration of Independence and see a list of signers, visit this website:

http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/charters_of_freedom/declaration/declaration_transcription.html

To read more about the history of the Declaration and learn more about the individual signers, visit this website:

<http://www.heritage.org/library/backgrounder/bg1451.html>

*“Where liberty dwells, there is my country.”
--Benjamin Franklin, 1785*